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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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Miscellaneous Information Concerning the Austrian Communist Party Central Committee

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[redacted]

June - 16 October 1948

1. Josef Tschofenig, member of the Carinthian Landtag, who visited Yugoslavia as CP delegate for three weeks in June 1948, began full-time work with the Central Committee in Vienna on 4 September 1948. He was formerly chairman of the CP provincial directorate in Carinthia.

Early August - September 1948

2. CP strikes planned for the fall of 1948 were discussed at a Cominform meeting in Budapest in early August 1948. Otto Martin Horneck and Friedl Fuernberg, Austrian Communists who were present at the meeting, requested that the CP be represented in the Cominform and that the Slovene Liberation Front (OF) be dissolved in Carinthia. Ten Viennese Communists were named to organize the strike plans, including Horneck and Gottlieb Fiala, as well as a CP representative from the Vereinigte Oesterreichische Eisen- und Stahlwerke A.G. in Linz, the Kaplun power plant in Land Salzburg, and the Alpine Montangesellschaft at Donawitz, Styria. In Budapest, Janos Varga, who has had vast experience in provoking Hungarian inflation, personally aided in the formulation of the Austrian strike plans. In September 1948, Erwin Zucker-Schilling and Johann Schmid visited Budapest to consult with Varga. [redacted] Comment: A Cominform-inspired meeting in Budapest in August 1948 to discuss trade union matters has been confirmed by other sources, but Austrian representation at this conference has not been previously reported. Otto Horneck and Fuernberg were mentioned at that time, in [redacted] in connection with a planned Cominform meeting in Prague which did not take place. Actual Cominform planning of CP strikes, although possible, is considered unlikely, particularly in view of the fact that Austria is not a member of the Cominform.) 25X1A6a

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[redacted] Comment: For later information on Austrian strike plans, see

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Early October 1948

3. Ing. Gustav Wegerer, residing in the Hochhaus, Vienna I, Herrengasse, has, until recently, been one of the chief editors of the Volksstimme and has also held the rank of director in Globus Verlag. Source notes that the general director of Globus is Johann Friedrich Schmid, residing at Vienna XI, Simmeringer Hauptstrasse 100/3. Wegerer took official leave of his colleagues at Globus early in October in order to take a position with the Central Committee. His secretary, Frl. Nahodil, will accompany him to his new position. [redacted] Comment: Wegerer is not carried on a list of members of the Central Committee published in the Volksstimme on 3 November 1948; this does not preclude the possibility that he is doing work for the Central Committee.)

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Early October 1948

4. A reorganization and revamping of the CP and the Central Committee which was supposed to take place during October has been postponed by order of Soviet authorities. This step has been taken by the Soviets since they have not yet decided who will conduct the reorganization. Furthermore, it is rumored that Soviet authorities in Vienna have received orders from Moscow to postpone reorganization of the CP until a final Soviet policy decision has been reached on Berlin. However, reorganization of the Werkschutz has been made according to plan and is nearly completed; a special Communist guard for Vienna, called the Ordnertruppe, is also being formed.

18 October 1948

5. An original document addressed to the Central Committee of the Austrian Communist Party by Cominform headquarters was recently turned over to Austrian State Secretary of Interior Graf by another official of the Ministry of the Interior. The document contains instructions which are to go into effect when Austria becomes a "people's democracy". These directives include a sketch of CP internal policy regulations governing the Communist press, indications as to the methods to be used in influencing non-Communist workers to cooperate with Communist leaders, and suggestions for a propaganda campaign calculated to win over non-Communist workers to the Communist camp. The document also states that Friedl Fuernberg will be appointed Chancellor in the Communist government. While no other specific appointments are mentioned, it is indicated that in the future "people's democracy" Cominform-approved CP members will constitute the nucleus of a reorganized Central Committee.

30-31 October 1948

6. On 31 October 1948, the Central Committee held a meeting in which provincial representatives took part to discuss a so-called action plan (Aktionsplan). A preparatory meeting the day before had already dealt with policy planning. It was agreed that the CP "Economic Plan" would no longer figure in the CP propaganda line. An intensified membership drive is planned, with special attention to be given to the industrial districts of Austria. Financial support for the Party is a troublesome question which has not yet been settled. Nevertheless, officials are confident that the CP will pick up two or three new mandates in the next elections and that other favorable possibilities are offered by the expected cooperation of extreme left-wing Socialists. The Central Committee also discussed the question of sabotaging Austrian industry through strikes, damaging of machinery, and particularly a planned attempt to interfere with electrical plants during the winter months. [redacted] Comment: The vagueness of this report makes it difficult to assess the plausibility of Communist intentions to sabotage Austrian industry; furthermore, the position of USIA firms in the Austrian economy would rule out extensive sabotage in the Soviet Zone.)

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Austrian Communist Interest in Switzerland

Undated: presumably September 1948

[redacted] 7. Vienna Communists are seeking to establish close contact with Switzerland, which they consider an information center of great value, not only for the present, but also in the event of future hostilities. Short-wave transmitters will be established for the purpose of passing information to the Cominform after normal communications between Cominform countries and Western Europe have been broken off. Especially reliable Communist radio operators, including women, are already being recruited and will be sent to Switzerland disguised as tourists shortly before hostilities begin.

Communist Stand on the DP Problem

7-13 October 1948

8. Officials of the Austrian Consulting Office for Volksdeutsche, Vienna III, Metternichgasse, believe that the CP will soon present a resolution to the Austrian Government, demanding immediate expulsion from Austria of all displaced persons and their transfer to the Soviet Zone of Germany, on the grounds that the DP problem is delaying an Austrian peace treaty. It is assumed that American and British authorities will veto the CP proposal; however, an effort will be made to remove or politically neutralize the Volksdeutsch element in the Soviet Zone of Austria. Meanwhile, the Central Committee for Volksdeutsche in Linz is trying to reach an understanding with the Austrian People's Party and the Socialist Party whereby Austrian citizenship will be granted to German-speaking DP's in Austria.

Miscellaneous Notes on the Communist Press

10 October 1948 25X1A2g 25X1A6a

9. The editor of the Soviet-sponsored newspaper, Oesterreichische Zeitung, Captain Schnitke, who returned to Vienna recently after a trip to Moscow, was to leave his post around the middle of October 1948. [redacted] Comment: See [redacted] Schnitke, the only Soviet journalist with the Oesterreichische Zeitung, is said to have been offered a position with the Soviet Information Office in Moscow. His successor at the Oesterreichische Zeitung will be the Soviet Captain Smolienski, who has the title of assistant editor. Since neither Smolienski nor any other Soviet official remaining with the newspaper is a journalist, Schnitke's editorial work will be continued by one of the Austrian editors. The Austrian editor, Kurt Pordes, although hitherto Schnitke's chief editorial assistant, will be forced to resign because of friction with Smolienski. Pordes has already been promised a position with the weekly newspaper, Der Mahnruf, as soon as he leaves the Oesterreichische Zeitung.

Early October 1948

10. Theobald Wiesinger, formerly CP district head (Bezirksvorsteher) in Vienna XVI, residing in Vienna XVI, Liebknechtgasse 36/II/29, is now working for Globus Verlag as legal representative of Der Abend, which is printed by Globus. He has been with Globus since March or April 1946.

22 October 1948

[redacted] 11. A meeting of all Austrian workers and employees of the Oesterreichische Zeitung took place in the newspaper's Globus Verlag offices on 22 October 1948. The occasion for this meeting was the failure of Soviet authorities directing the newspaper to pay its employees the legal six percent increase, plus legally-calculated increases for cost of living and supplementary pay for children; editorially, the Oesterreichische Zeitung has favored a 25 percent pay increase. A particular grievance is that the promised six percent increase is already in- the new calculation of Austrian income taxes. It was finally decided to petition

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Capt. Sprecher, Soviet administrative officer, for a temporary cash settlement for all personnel on the grounds that the increase has already gone into effect in all other newspaper enterprises; Sprecher was also reminded of a promise made by him some time ago to carry the pay increase into effect. Sprecher replied that he was inalterably opposed to cash advances, and that he would not be able to keep his promise in the near future because of the slow pace of Soviet official procedure. Source notes in this connection that the Oesterreichische Zeitung is merely a lessee of Globus Verlag and must reimburse Globus for publishing costs, heating, and other maintenance expenses. Despite many complaints from its shop council, Globus has hitherto been unwilling to pay its personnel in advance, as legally required on the basis of a collective contract. The Globus management has explained that its inability to raise the money needed for advance payment is due to repeated failure on the part of the Oesterreichische Zeitung to meet its bills for rent and other expenses. Recently the Oesterreichische Zeitung paid Globus 40,000 schillings, and this will be used for advance payment to some of the workmen in the low wage category. Globus has recently dismissed 85 workers and 53 white-collar workers, and more dismissals are believed to be imminent.

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12. Jenoe Kostmann, veteran Communist and editor on the Volksstimme staff, has recently grown friendly with Eva Priester, editor of Die Woche, who is interested in organizing an information service which will exclude Zucker-Schilling. [redacted] Comment: Presumably, a news-gathering network.) Eva Priester's influence in the Party is growing, and she is treated with great respect by influential Communists such as Ruth Fischer. It is rumored that Kostmann will soon leave Vienna on a special mission, and that the details and purpose of this trip are known only to Kostmann himself and Fuernberg. A rumor that Kostmann has been given a special assignment in Hungary was started by Zucker-Schilling, who would like nothing better than to rid himself of this potential rival; but in Communist circles it is generally believed that Kostmann, who has worked his way into an influential position with the Volksstimme, will not stay away from Vienna long.

Communist Military Activities

8 August 1948

13. On 8 August 1948, thirty-five men, all members of the CP from Vienna, were sent to Lager Doellersheim at Goepfritz, Lower Austria, under the direction of an Austrian named Ignaz Leitner, for a course of military and political instruction. Leitner had previously taken part in a special Communist Party course given at Sopron; he returned from Sopron on 14 July 1948.

September 1948

14. A new CP school, called Parteischule Laufenberger, has been opened under the direction of Franz Honner, Gerka, and Spanner, all veterans of the Spanish Civil War. The school is at Vienna II, Sportklubgasse 11. Across the street, at No. 6, is another villa, formerly Soviet-requisitioned, which was turned over to the CP at the end of August 1948 and was occupied with great secrecy by about 20 Communists.

4 - 13 October 1948

15. A veteran Viennese Communist stated to source on 13 October 1948 that the Soviets have distributed rifles to reliable Communists in Lower Austria to be cached for future use in strikes and riots. He claimed that on 4 October he saw a truckload of these rifles in front of a Soviet-requisitioned building in Vienna II, Boecklinstrasse 88. [redacted] Comment: This is in the vicinity of Vienna Werkschutz headquarters, which are located at Boecklinstrasse 57.)

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